

Animal Care Center for Education, Outreach and Technology

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USDA/APHIS/Animal Care (AC) plans to establish a Center for Education, Outreach and Technology that will focus solely on animal welfare issues. In recent years, animal welfare has become an issue of great interest around the world.

The United States has long been the leader in establishing Centers that focus on plant and animal health issues. For instance, the Center for Plant Health Science and Technology, which is a part of USDA's Animal and Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) is well known for offering its expertise worldwide. Also, APHIS's Veterinary Services' program has established the Center for Epidemiology and Animal Health, another resource that is recognized and highly respected throughout the world. APHIS's Wildlife Services' program has established the National Wildlife Research Center, which is gaining attention to its innovative research regarding living with, and responding to, wildlife issues.

The AC program is recognized domestically and internationally as the agency responsible for animal welfare in the USA. As a result AC, routinely works with industry, state and federal agencies, and other countries developing welfare standards. Additionally, AC has developed technology capable of assessing the physical and environmental wellbeing of animals and responds to many requests domestically and internationally for assessments. These activities are carried out as part of AC's outreach activities. To support these activities, the operation of the Center will be *in addition* to work already being done by Animal Care. Animal Care's primary mission is the welfare of animals and depends primarily on the successful completion of inspection of facilities and subsequent enforcement, when needed. No funds used for the Center will be diverted from this primary mission.

The Center for Education and Outreach will serve as the national resource for policy development and analysis, training, science, and technology in support of the Animal Welfare Act, the Horse Protection Act, and other activities related to animal welfare; the Center will benefit both USDA and the regulated/non regulated entities by providing essential technical information and educational programs.

The Center will; respond to OIE concerns as they related to animal welfare; serve as a central location for liaison with stakeholders; conduct educational workshops and seminars; conduct precicensing activities, which are educational in nature; house Animal Care's species specialists (i.e., elephant specialist, big cat specialist, primate specialist, etc.); house research and transportation specialists; and conduct research concerning best use of technology to support animal welfare issues (database development, thermography, etc.).

The proposed Center for Education and Outreach will enhance current outreach activities by AC and continue the role of the U.S. as a leader in establishing scientific based Centers devoted to plant health, animal health, and animal welfare activities.